

***REMARKS BY HEIDI JOVANOVIC***  
***Head of the US Embassy Banja Luka office***

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Good evening. I am Heidi Jovanovic, Head of the US Embassy Banja Luka office. Thank you for coming this evening.

I would especially like to thank Milorad Zivkovic, Speaker of the Bosnia and Herzegovina House of Representatives and Deputy Defense Minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina Igor Crnadak for being here this evening with us.

We are here tonight to celebrate an important and historic occasion: the decision by NATO at the recent Bucharest Summit to offer intensified dialogue to Bosnia and Herzegovina. The offer of intensified dialogue, extended so soon after Bosnia and Herzegovina joined the Partnership for Peace, clearly demonstrates the esteem in which NATO holds this country. Members of the alliance want to deepen their cooperation and partnership with Bosnia and Herzegovina. The United States, after our long and hard work in helping this country develop and rebuild following the war, takes particular pride in seeing Bosnia and Herzegovina and all its citizens take their rightful place within the Euro-Atlantic community. Today Bosnia and Herzegovina is our partner and close friend. We look forward to the day when Bosnia and Herzegovina becomes a full member of the NATO alliance.

NATO's decision to grant intensified dialogue is due in large part to the success achieved in implementing comprehensive defense reform. While this reform is by no means complete, the achievements to date have been nothing short of remarkable. The success of defense reform demonstrates that, by making hard choices and finding room for compromise, leaders at the state and entity level can affect real changes that move this country forward. These changes will solidify the country's standing in Euro-Atlantic structures, to the benefit of all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

On this historic occasion, we would like to congratulate Bosnia and Herzegovina on the offer of intensified dialogue and express our hope for continued progress in implementing defense reform. The United States stands behind Bosnia and Herzegovina as it moves closer to NATO membership, and will continue to provide all support necessary to support further integration into the alliance.

I would now like to introduce one individual who has played a particularly important role in helping Bosnia and Herzegovina move down the NATO path, Igor Crnadak. As Deputy Minister of Defense and Chairman of the BiH NATO Coordination Team, he has worked hard for the past year to fully prepare Bosnia and Herzegovina for the Bucharest Summit. He can claim a fair share of the responsibility for the good news at Bucharest, and is part of the strong defense leadership team in Sarajevo. Mr. Deputy Minister...